(d) if so, to what extent these measures have helped in moving fast in cleaning up these projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA): (a) National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has been making countinuous efforts to streamline internal process.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) It is expected that the measures adopted will smoothen the expedite the award and implementation of projects and also will help to maintain quality.

Connectivity of North-Eastern Region

471. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether State capitals in the North-Eastern Regions are proposed to be connected with by motorable roads with National Capital and also connected with each other; and

(b) if so, the status of the construction of National Highways in the North-Eastern Region which when completed would give connectivity with State Capital of seven States with Delhi and other State Capitals *Inter-se?*

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA): (a) and (b) the State capital in the North-Eastern Region are already connected with each other and with the National Capital with National Highways. These National Highways (NHs) are being maintained in traffic worthy condition from within available resources. Further improvement/upgradation of these NHs "have been proposed under the National Highway Development Project (NHDP) Phase III and Special Accelerated Road Development Programme in the North-Eastern Region (SARDP-NE) in two phases.

Sethu Samudram Project

472. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sethu Samudram Project was launched recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have taken note of resistance and opposition from fishermen and environmental experts in implementing the project; and

(d) if so, in what manner the problems have been addressed?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT ANDHIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The commencement of work of Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project was inaugurated on 2nd July, 2005. The project is estimated to cost Rs. 2427.40 crores and is scheduled to be completed in about three and half years time.

(c) and (d) The concerns expressed by fishermen and environmentalists *inter-alia* include likely damage to marine ecology, marine flora and fauna, coral reefs, adverse effects on fish breeding and fish catching. While formulating the project, adequate care has been taken to ensure that adverse impact on environment is minimal. Two rounds of public hearing were also conducted as a part of the process for obtaining environmental clearance for this project where concerns raised by fishermen representatives and Non-Governmental Organisations were noted. These concerns along with the response of project authorities were considered by the Ministry of Environment & Forests while granting environmental clearance to the project. The conditions attached with the environmental clearance *inter-alia* enjoin upon project authority to monitor marine environment quality periodically and take all necessary measures to protect the bio-diversity including endangered species of mangroves, corals, mammals. For the benefit of local fishermen, development of fishing harbours has also been planned as a part of the project.

Road maintenance in Madhya Pradesh

†473. SHRI RK. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of SHIPPING ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that National Highways passing through Nine districts in Madhya Pradesh are in bad shape due to recent flood in Madhya Pradesh;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.